Between Two Stations

Dr. Shabnam Ashai

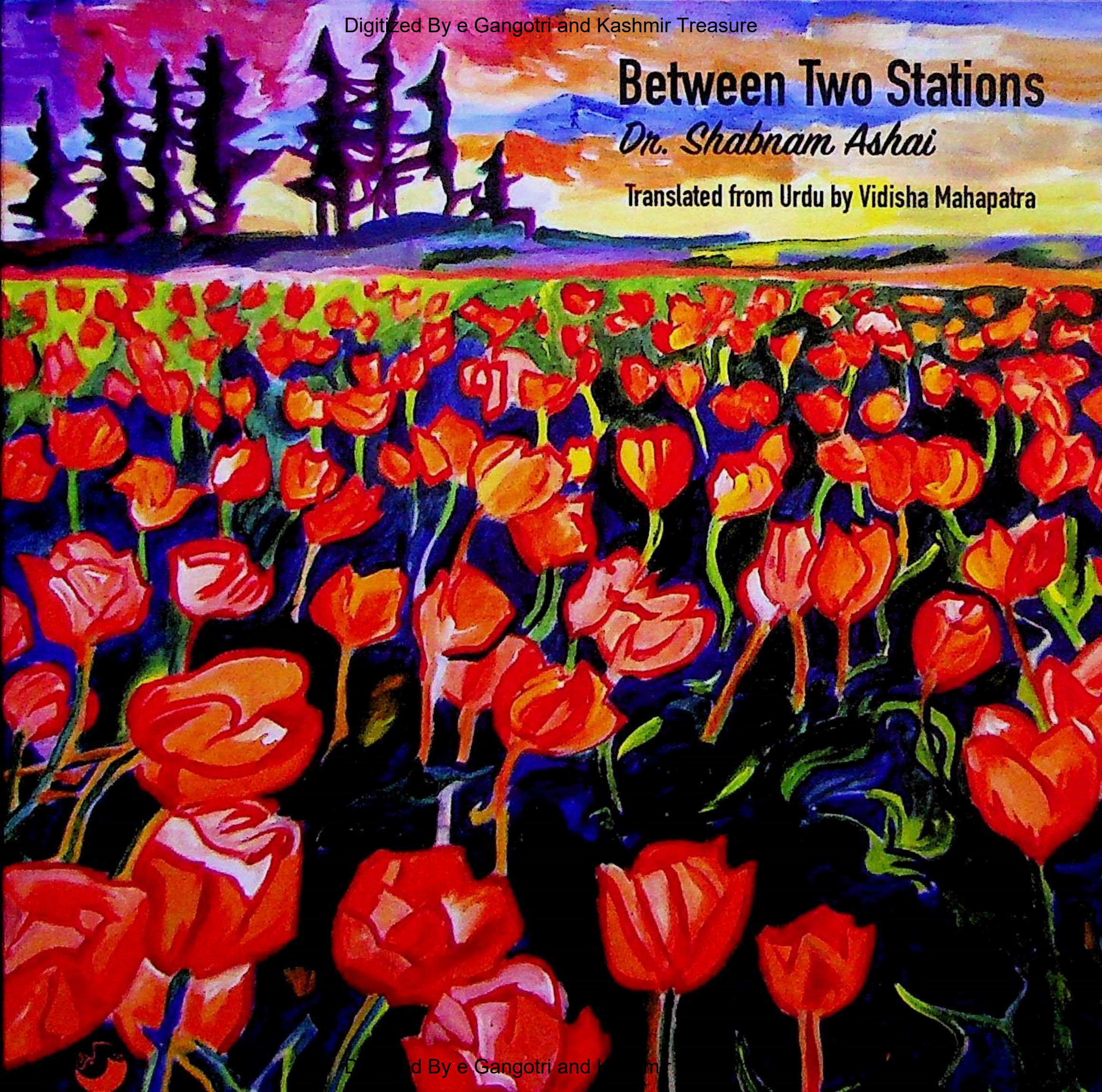
Translated from Urdu by Vidisha Mahapatra



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between two stations

Shabnam Ashai has done Ph.D from Aligarh Muslim University. She has worked on existentialism. She has written a monograph on "Camus Concept of Alienation" and a book on existentialism namely existentialistic concept of Alienation.

Presently she is broadcaster at Radio Kashmir Srinagar. She has six poetry collections namely Akeli, Mein Sochti Hoon, Mann baani, Catharsis, Mann Bavath (Kashmiri translation of Mann baani) and Man Mein Jami Barf. She has not taken the path of traditional Urdu poets who have tried to completely break away from the traditional mode of expression.

Her poems are witness to her talent – the powerful expression of intricate feelings of relationship in a fresh, thoughtful and reflective language. It is saga of being. It is a women's reflection on relationship. It's not a confrontation but a narrative full of questions.

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between two stations

Poems by Dr. Shabnam Ashai

Translated from Urdu by Vidisha Mahapatra

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Translated from Urdu
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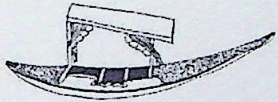
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For
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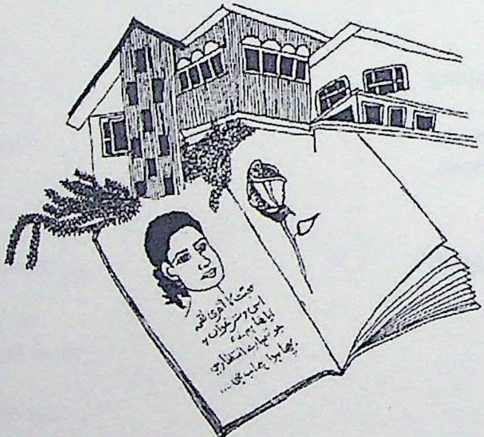


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Introduction

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محبت کا آخری قصہ
اسی دسترخوان پہ
لکھا ہے
جو تمہارے انتظار میں
بیٹھا ہوا ہے اب بھی...

Translator's Note

One fine day, I was staring at my bookshelf and found a book "Mannbaani" by Dr. Shabnam Ashai. When I jabbed into her poems, I got inked instantly and I decided to translate her poems.

Edward Hirsch, American poet and critic writes; "translation is a necessity, the only way of bridging the barriers of language." I totally agreed with this thought and so my belief is, A translation has to be close enough that the reader feels like he is reading from the original one and not the translation. And here with the book "Mannbaani" I have tried my best to justify the beauty of original language Urdu while translating it into English and somehow, I managed to blur that fine line between them.

While reading the book it feels like the poet wants you to touch the horizon of the illusion she created in her surroundings and at the same time it quickly grounds you to the reality of different phases of life. Though it took many years to assemble those broken "pieces" and finally those phases became a poetry collection in a form of the book "Mannbaani", "Catharsis" and "Mann mein jami barf".

With great joy, I have translated Dr. Shabnam Ashai's Urdu poetry. The poetry is so compelling blending surreal with subaltern. I would like to thank Dr. Shabnam Ashai for her constant encouragement and guidance throughout the creative process. I am so gratefully indebted to Basant Parihar (Poet and Play writer) and Sanket Mahapatra for their helpful suggestions.

between two stations

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On the nail
I hung a poem.
How I wish to connect
in the crowd of strangers
Who keep a hand
on my shoulder
and say,
"departing from you
I have departed
from myself."
Alas! All the connections
have turned
emotionally insolvent
and yet,
strangely,
they portray emotions.
Come on, o traveler heart,
let us unhook the poem
and whisper,
"Departing from you
I have departed from myself."

~ *from Mann me jami barf*

I was alive,
When you were close,
When you went away
I missed every moment
I spent with you.
The fragrance
is the witness
which wafts
when the heart is drenched
with tears of faith
every evening.

~ *from Mann me jami barf*

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The tears
are flowing.
I could not hold a pen.
The love for you
faded away with my tears.

Living with allegations
you forgot
to envelope
yourself
in living.
God also,
forgot
to write
someone in my fortune.
Ignoring love,
you have ended up with
fizzle out.
I'm lying down
in a coffin,
without
entwine myself in love.
For god's sake,
don't condemn death.
death is the truth,
The only truth.

~ *from Catharsis*

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You have not
sheltered me
but do come
to cover me with a handful soil!!

Though,
you were my shelter
to cover,
you disrobed me.

I'm not Lallah-Aarifa
to drag you away
from loneliness,
I am born from
your left rib,
walked along to heaven
I'm a part of your life.

Not by your tenant,
It was signed
By the holy Quran.

Wander
with the broken rib
and dumb head.
I am not Lallah-Aarifa
that tandoor would shelter me.

Do come
to my grave
to cover me
with a handful soil!!

~ from Catharsis

I am a lab of Aulias.
they say
God is happy with me
but not people.

I am fed up with people
but not averse with nature.
The seasons of
trust have passed now.

The chords of stormy season
screams within me.
Could people's dishonesty
sheltered with the truth?
My destiny is defined!!
How could I think!

The people who claimed their lie
as truth
could have some,
to break my roof!

And,
those who trample
faith, belief and love
will change the
meaning of life,

I was thoughtless!
I just wished
to hold my head high,
covering myself with the odhni
of loyalty and faith.

I never thought
I would deal with unfair destiny.
Kindness of the world,
would lose
in the darkness.

But yes,
I had seen someone
who could see the world
without an eye.

~ *from Catharsis*

*Odhni ~ Scarf

You have to think
what is in my eyes!!
Dream or fear.

You have to think,
I am facing my fate,
or the mist of fate!!

You have to think,
I passed my life or
lived death.

Can you draw a fine line?

~ *from Catharsis*

Till the dawn
my grave awoke.
When will I dream?
When will I breathe?
Whom should I ask
even in the dreams?

Nobody is there
to guide me.
The dead can not
visit their grave.

I have seen life
in a map like sea,
that was so blue.
I have never seen such since then.
But there is no time to think.
Would find skills to live,
If I think once again.

Now it is time to break the doll,
that took twenty years to assemble.
and then I have to damp down
the fire that was lit
from my frustration.
Would glass and ashes be buried?

~ *from Mann Baani*

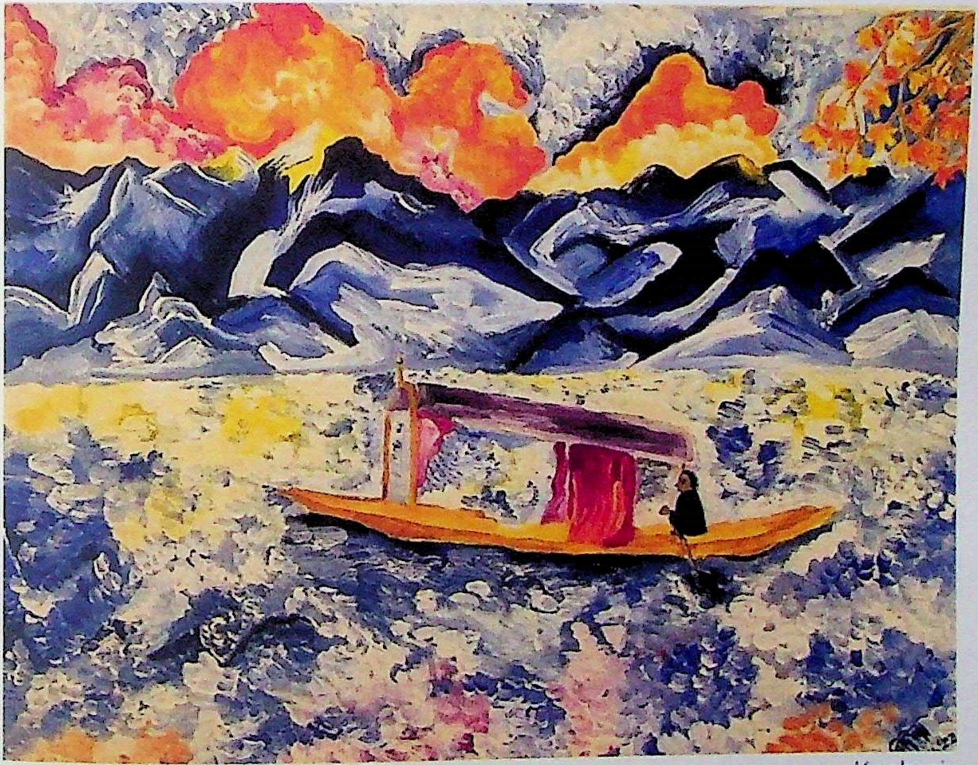
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Then I turned
into a stone,
that
rolled away
along the river,
How water shaped me!

How long it dragged me along.
Why you think
you have stolen my joys,
If you return a single one
maybe I could have ceased
by turning into a stone.

~ *from Catharsis*

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Kashmir

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Logged into sadness
imprisoned in a room
better than remaining busy,
Why do you pretend
to be a devoid machine.
The passion of politics
would not give you
a warm relationship.
Even if the relationship
saddened and imprisoned us.

~ *from Catharsis*

My loneliness is
knocking,
your escape
might be easy for you,
it happens always,
on losing love,
our deserted support
turns into love.

~ from Catharsis

Don't cry,
Laugh,
on his blindness,
laugh
and turn into a stone
before separation.

~ *from Catharsis*

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He was self-obsessed,
how could be mine?
Though he was my cloth,
he attires me with allegations
and hang himself
to enchant all.

I,
a feeling
giving my emotions
to infuse him
with joy.

With a single crease,
the colors of rainbow
turned black.

Crease and ink
swinging in the
cradle of night
and
dreaming into
each other's eyes.

~ *from Catharsis*

It turned into
a graveyard
where I planted roses.

A full moon he comforts by
scratching his back
with a trunk.

On my back
an abscess
of fragrance
erupted!

A girl
who left home
and returning
with a bundle of leaves
she lit a bonfire
with all
in a cold night.

I who started
a journey in the
morning,
will freeze
alone in the night.

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I will hear the silent night,
I will cover the dark night.
my red, green
blue, yellow lights
merged
into witchcraft
on a virgin night.

~ *from Catharsis*

You know that
your creation
found no place
in thought,
mind,
home.
In the perishable world
she wandered
dust laden.

You know that,
there is no coin of cunningness
within
your creation.
So that she could find
bread,
relationship.

In the universe
one of your creations
is
as lonely,
As you!

~ *from Catharsis*

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It is a
snowfall
not on the earth
But
in my mind....
Have you ever seen
snow
could freeze the mind?
and the players ski
on that snow!!

~ *from Mann me jami barf*

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You did not accept me.
It is not your house,
I expect you
to absorb.

Dripping
with the time
I would be absorbed.

You are so crammed,
to feel
my aroma,
my art,
in
an anger,
hate,
envy,
jealousy and prejudice
I would die,
ringing in quietness
I am love.

~ *from Catharsis*

It is a
snowfall
not on the earth
But
in my mind....
Have you ever seen
snow
could freeze the mind?
and the players ski
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ringing in quietness
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~ *from Catharsis*

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I don't offer
my fingers
but my heart.
You capped my finger gaps
with the relationship.
The silence of heart
holding fingers
gathers shadows.
Why the heart
still weaves relationships?
Even on fading voices.
Does your mind
have hands to break
the silent heart?

~ *from Mann me jami barf*

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Yes,
you broke
the poem.
You broke and erased.

Right from the dawn
it was with me.
It was running with me,
on the treadmill.

It was with me,
in the kitchen,
while making dough,
while making paste of spices,
while taking a bath,
I hold it in my breath,
while doing make up.
I decorated my lips
with its sap.

On the breakfast table,
it sipped tea with me.
It made a journey
with me,
crossing the sea
it rocked with me.

In the office, too,
holding my finger
it climbed stair after stair
with me.

You broke,
Yes,
you broke the poem.

With whom
I return home
in the evening?
You have broken,
Yes you have broken the poem.

~ *from Mann me jami barf*



In the journey

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They buried
all their bitter truths,
in my chest
and joined
the dance of life.
I am not at peace like a grave.
I am just silent.
The scent of death
has spread in my veins.
They smell it
and declared me insane.
I welcome them as
death welcomes
a human.

~ *from Catharsis*

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Your cowardice
changes its way,
time by time.
My helplessness too
changes.

But,
only I suffered
by your changes.
My thoughts rolled down
how many trails,
How would you believe?
Where are you, my life?
Where are you?

I adorn
a piece of paper,
every evening,
with your name!!

Still,
I wish to forget
that faith is not your nature!!

Still,
I turn above
all the moments

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in search of
the silent moment,
That could convey you
that my hug
embrace your escape tightly
and I cover myself with you.

How would you know
How would you
Where are you my life?

My eyes are full
and the eyelashes
did not allow to scatter
those dreams
that you will cover me
like a wound,
will take care of
this great match
How would you know
How would you believe
Where are you, oh my life?
Where?

~ *from Catharsis*

The child
with a dream in his eyes
life on his palm,
smiles in his lap
he asks him
to count the wrinkles
of his face.
From the
innocent palm
not only the life slides away,
dreams too vanished
from his virgin eyes.
The innocent eyes
turned aged,
no shadow,
no dream,
no life,
in the crowd of life
he stands alone.

~ *from Catharsis*

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Toxic talks
not only robbed
peace
but weave the destiny too.
Like toxic nights.
The poisonous words
not only harm ear
but flow in
the veins and arteries.
Mind and body
turned poisonous.
Where is love?
A drop of your love
still shelter me.
You are the
only God,
creator of life,
savior of my life,
you are the
only sailor
who threads
breath in breath
sailing the life-boat.

~ *from Catharsis*

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Why do you fight?
your fearful dreams
are not jewelry
but screams.
I am oblivious
from the touch of mangalsutra
it's not the tears
of a woman,
but pain of love.
Pain of silent existence
Love is not a sign language
It's a skill of arbitrary.
You have no voice
just ears.
Mind is ringing
the tunes of love.
I molded in the
clay of love and faith,
How could absorb
You in hate and doubt!!
Let's think;
Look, I am destroyed,
With whom will you
celebrate your being?

~ *from Catharsis*

*Mangalsutra ~ a necklace that the groom ties around the bride's neck in the Indian subcontinent.

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One-sided faith
turns into tears.

Obedience
turns into a wound
in indifference.

A woman is
a tear and a wound,
a man can only be
a frame of mind.

We hide this difference
in relationships,
and cover with
the attire of one another.
Just not become faithless
but naked.

In the desire to
be naked,
we cover faces
in some expertise.
And our helper says
he has desire to rise
in life.

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No one thinks
he is my shelter.
No one understand
he is my honor,
no one believes,
our relationship is pious.
No one knows,
he is my better half.

~ *from Catharsis*

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Don't know
where are they buried?
My face
turned into a stone
in search of the human beings.
a fierce howl of animals,
I have lost my voice,
a stone face,
fictional voice
how terrifying it is?
Do you know?
Then why do you
keep on watching
So silently,
Oh God?

~ *from Catharsis*

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When
from faces of
intimate ones
emerge
strangers
thoughts,
experience,
pain,
joy,
all
resonate in voice.

~ *from Catharsis*

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Prayer Flags

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Like a blotting paper,
my existence is filled,
no strand can imbibe any more.
All the colors of my fate
have turned into blemishes.
Every blemish
opens its eye.
There are cobwebs
in every scene.
Don't know
Where is the spider?

~ *from Catharsis*

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You could
sprout
grow
bloom
sway
merge
with me.
I am the soil
of creation,
not a casino table
that
you can stake,
win or
lose
to be an
insolvent.

~ *from Catharsis*

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Who was cheated?
you or me!!
It's very difficult
to live with betrayal
for you, as for me.
Stars are as distant
from me
as from you.
The truth of life is
Death
for you as well as for me.
Then why don't
we call this betrayal
as fate and ease
life a bit.

~ *from Catharsis*

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I never restrained from
living your life.
Your passion,
your displeasure
never restrained
you to live
whatever you desired.
But you stopped me
to have a bread.
You can live
with anything
a lie,
pretense,
anger.
I can live
with a breath
and a piece of bread.
I keep on living
watching you alive
But,
How can you live
watching me
dying??

~ from Catharsis

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Why our night
is divided in fragments?
One in your hand
and the other in mine.
In search of bread
if we lose our fists,
we may lose
our scattered nights,
come,
let's wait
at the threshold of morning
to gather those scattered pieces
of our night
and
throw them
in the morning
in search of bread.

~ *from Catharsis*

Why the days do not
throb in the chest,
why they speak
such language
that impacts my mind?
Why don't we live
love,
intimacy,
closeness
and live with
circumstances
and
presumptions.
Why don't we grow or
absorb ourselves within.
Why our closed ones
do not meet us face to face,
do not thread emotions,
why do they stare us
as if we were
the target?

~ *from Catharsis*

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The fate is inscribed
in my hand
cannot be erased.
You could have changed
your view
and saved me.
Surrounded by thoughts
I lost my sleep
and
you lost me
while sleeping.
Losing me,
you feel so relaxed,
but I feel the burden of
losing my dreams,
like a mountain!
Mountains
turned into a heart
when a melody of
intimacy strikes them.
In the silence
of unfamiliarity
between me and
the season of
snowfall
there is waiting.

~ *from Catharsis*

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When relationships,
pain and love
turned into ego,
mind rebels.
In the valley of escape,
passes through roads
similar to cemetery
and lives in the
world of tears!
and those who live happy lives
nourishing their village of dreams
turn into
cobras or creepers.
The cobras bite
intimacy,
love
and we turn into strangers.
creepers take their roots
and we get uprooted!

~ *from Catharsis*

The absorbing shoes
wore me,
and enlighten a journey.
I have
my silence,
there is no voice.
Dreams, love, trust
slumbers
everything lies
in the crevices
of feudalism.
The strip of trust is
more important
than the silence.
On having sores
the passion of faith
intensifies.
Watching my feet
like a peacock
I cry –
"return my feet!"
before I die
I wish to root
my heart
somewhere else.

~ *from Catharsis*

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Once again
the black
sun rises.
I could stumble again
could shatter again!!
If death hangs itself
I was fortunate.

~ from Catharsis

Thought,
experience,
misery,
pleasure,
let down
the echoes,
when our knowns
unmasked
with strangers.

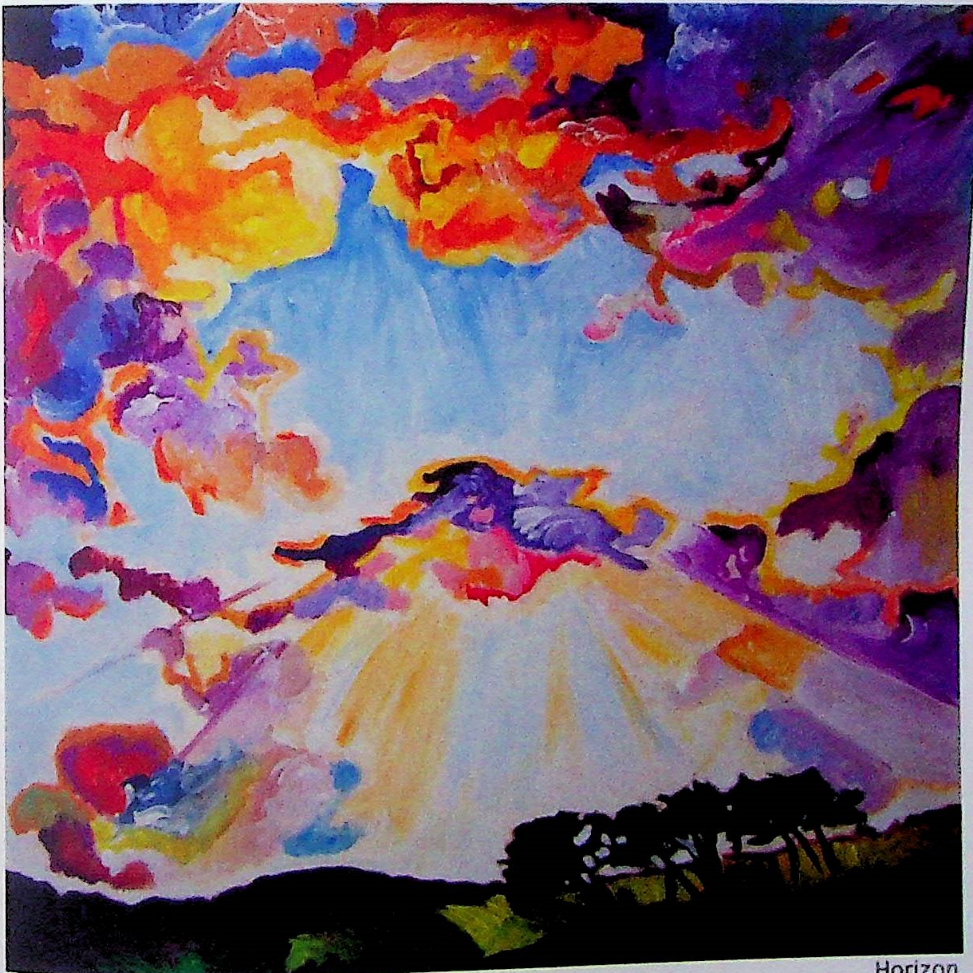
~ *from Catharsis*

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Darkness
and
I,
not any
way,
destination,
path,
dream,
knock,
await,
word,
melody,
not any harmony,
sound,
But oh God,
You.

~ *from Catharsis*

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Horizon

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You can grow in me,
can bloom,
can walk,
can be jealous,
I am clay – soil,
not a casino-table
You can bet me
and
to be insolvent.

~ *from Catharsis*

You won't be
weigh down
if you dressed
me with allegations,
your call will be discarded
because
you are my
attire.

~ *from Catharsis*

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Neither
love nor life
let's be faithful
don't cry,
don't give up
if you cry,
everything is erased,
if you are released,
the world is released.

~ from Catharsis

Turned into rock
and the river
took me along!
How does the
water carve me
how long it last.
Why do you think?
If you return
my happiness
that you snatched away
maybe it keeps
turning into stone.

~ *from Catharsis*

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Sometimes
I feel as if
I am a wheel chair
I handicapped
gradually,
paralyzed
from their destination,
I was moved
by wheels,
left, right,
forward, backward….
Suddenly,
by reaching
the destination,
he abandoned
the hands of
my wheel chair
and
escaped me.

~ *from Catharsis*

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I've been
patting by
my loneliness
and
you would be
caressing
by your absconding.
It often happens
while losing love,
our rejected support
becomes
our passion.

~ *from Catharsis*

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The dream
has seen bangles,
not my hands.
My hands became
listener
of my mind.
They listen
the knocking dreams.
But the lines of my hands
ask the ink
about the flavor of bangles.

~ from Mann me jami barf

How can you see
that cloud of smoke,
that fraud has blown away
in my mind.
While closing eyes,
I am looking
for your face.
I am deceived,
don't get carried away
with regrets,
get into my heart
like a belief.

~ *from Mann me jami barf*

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When I was gasping
like a faithful dog
at your thresh hold
I was driven out
from your yard
Now,
you are in
the estate of happiness,
expectant from
pandemic fraud
Why are you calling me?

~ from Mann me jami barf

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It is a poem
not tears.

Not even poem
maybe
it's you.

you are in my moist eyes,
soil of grave is drying up.

~ *from Mann me jami barf*

It is a pity to decide,
whether
he was sunbathing
in the desert,
or counting
the boiling streams
of love!!

~ *from Mann me jami barf*

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Have you ever seen
the fading paths,
in the snowfall
of loneliness?
Everything fading away,
life also,
from eye sight,
in the snowfall
of loneliness
when icy mist
numbs my mind.

~ from Mann me jami barf

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In the midst of
a ruined mind,
you spread out
like
an obsession,
a pain,
a fragrance,
sometimes like
a cloud of tears.
All this happens
in the pain.
But,
in the midst of
a ruined mind,
what's like waiting?

~ *from Mann me jami barf*

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Will not search
the meaning
of dream,
if it would be
miserable,
let it be,
give me
an empty dream.

~ *from Mann me jami barf*

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I don't want to glorify
the sore wounds.

I don't want to glorify
by pampering
tearful moments.

I don't want to glorify
the loyalty of separation.

Blow me off,
yes, blow me off.

~ *from Mann me jami barf*



Shabnam Ashai has done Ph.D from Aligarh Muslim University. She has worked on existentialism. She has written a monograph on "Camus Concept of Alienation" and a book on existentialism namely existentialistic concept of Alienation.

Presently she is broadcaster at Radio Kashmir Srinagar. She has six poetic collection namely Akeli, Mein Sochti Hoon, Mannbaani, Catharsis, Mann Bavath (Kashmiri translation of Mann baani) and Man Mein Jami Barf. She has not taken the path of traditional Urdu poets who have tried to completely break away from the traditional mode of expression.

Her poems are witness to her talent – the powerful expression of intricate feelings of relationship in a fresh, thoughtful and reflective language. It is saga of being. It is a women's reflection on relationship. It's not a confrontation but a narrative full of questions.



Vidisha Mahapatra is a bilingual poet, writes in English and Urdu. She studied Commerce and having a Masters degree in Finance. Presently she is working in a Government bank as an Assistant Manager.

She is a trained classical Singer, deciple of Ustad Shaukat Hussain Khan Aagra Gharana. She is also a painter, writer, translator and an avid solo traveler who fall in love with poetry. She has been awarded a prestigious "*Raja Ravi Verma International Award*" for painting in 2021 from Lalit Kala Kendra, Assam. Her first solo painting exhibition "Painted Sky" was held at Hutheesing Visual Art Centre, Ahmedabad in 2022.

Being a commerce student she always feel that contradiction within her between art and finance but she finally found herself in colours and words. She chose to spread her artistic vision through poetry and translation.

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Shabnam Ashai –

Making a dough
from the ink
You forget to make a roti
by covering up
a chaddar of homage
You're climbing a stairs of
Mazar é Makhdoom
Your ink is swinging
under the shadow of insomnia
You lit the lantern
by the wounds of your heart
wearing the words
You entered naked in the poem
Your poems are
the confession of your soul.

- Jayant Parmar

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